

TWENTY-SECOND

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

THE TRUSTEES

OF THE

PERKINS INSTITUTION

AND

MASSACHUSETTS

ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND,

TO THE

CORPORATION.

CAMBRIDGE:

METCALF AND COMPANY,

PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

1854.



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REPORT.

Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind.

Boston, January 16, 1854.

TO THE CORPORATION.

GENTLEMEN,—The undersigned, Trustees appointed by your Board, and by the authorities of the State, respectfully submit their Annual Report, and the several documents required by the law.

The Report of the Treasurer will show the condition of the finances.

The several inventories of real and personal estate will show the amount of property of all kinds owned by the Institution.

The Report of the Director will set forth the details of the history and condition of the establishment during the past year. The undersigned, while following the example of preceding Boards, and leaving the immediate care and management of the Institution to the Director, have not failed to satisfy themselves that their confidence was deserved.

The undersigned earnestly commend to the Board and to their successors, the claim of the Institution against the city of Boston for damages.

Six years ago the grounds and gardens, the out-buildings and fences, were all in excellent order. There were gardens well stocked with shrubbery and trees of many years' growth, and there was easy access upon the north and east sides. But the city altered the existing grades, lowered Broadway, and cut through the hills of the east and south, leaving precipices forty feet deep. It was necessary to abandon the establishment and remove into the country, or go to great expenditures of money in the expectation that the city would reimburse it. The latter course was adopted. A heavy embankment and a long flight of steps saved the north side. On the east, a steep embankment just saved the main building, but access there had to be abandoned. The outbuildings and fences had to be removed, the trees and shrubs cut down, and the gardens destroyed, and the whole surface removed and re-graded. The work has been going on during five years, and has but recently been completed by the city, so that the grounds of the establishment could be put in order. More than \$ 6,000 have been expended from the scanty funds in the treasury ; there has been a loss in buildings and fences which \$ 4,000 would not replace, and there must still be a considerable expenditure of money to finish the work ; and when all is done, the access to the main building must ever be inconvenient. During all these years great inconvenience and discomfort have been suffered by the inmates, who have been deprived of their play-ground, and by all connected with the establishment.

The matter has been before a committee of the Board of Aldermen, who have unanimously reported that the city ought to pay the sum of \$10,000 as damages. If this were done, and the Institution were exempted from taxation for sidewalks and sewers, pecuniary justice would be done, but nothing more.

The immediate and special object for which this Institution was originally designed, to wit, the instruction of blind children of New England, has been attained; and so long as the annual appropriations in its favor are continued by Massachusetts and by the other States, so long may every blind child in our borders have opportunities of instruction equal to those enjoyed by seeing children in our best public schools. But, as in every other work of beneficence, the attainment of one object opens to the beneficent mind new objects of interest and new fields of labor. In the present case, two objects of great interest and of pressing importance have been disclosed; the first is, to enable indigent blind persons to earn their own livelihood by their own labors; the second, to provide a library of books in raised print for those blind persons who have learned to read.

With regard to the first, experience has proved that the ordinary wages, or the income, of the common day-laborer so little exceeds his necessary daily expenses, that when, as in the blind man's case, the income falls short, then want presses on his heels. The margin is so narrow, that, no matter how little the income falls below the average, the want is immediately felt, as, in a tread-mill, if the foot lags but ever so little, the heel is ground.

Now some provision is needed by which the blind man's margin may be a little enlarged, so that, while he shall be held to work (as all ought to be who would eat), yet, since through his infirmity his performance is necessarily less than that of other men, the reward for it shall be equally great, or enough to live upon. This principle is sound and plain, and it gives to the blind man a strong claim upon the justice of society. It ought to be acted upon; nevertheless the Institution has not the pecuniary means of acting upon it to any sufficient extent. There is many a blind man, who, because he cannot quite earn his living by work, is obliged to renounce work altogether, and live at public charge.

Another object is the supply of books in raised letters, — a library, in short, for the blind, containing dictionaries, books of science, and standard books of reference.

Both these objects will be fully set forth in the Report of the Director, but the undersigned cannot leave their trust without earnestly commending them to the attention of all who are able to do anything towards promoting them.

Respectfully submitted by

THOMAS T. BOUVÉ,
 THOMAS G. CARY,
 THEOPHILUS P. CHANDLER,
 GEORGE B. EMERSON,
 STEPHEN FAIRBANKS,
 EDWARD JARVIS,
 JOSEPH LYMAN,
 SAMUEL MAY,
 GEORGE R. RUSSELL,
 G. HOWLAND SHAW,
 W. D. TICKNOR.

REPORT

OF THE DIRECTOR TO THE TRUSTEES.

GENTLEMEN, — The following Report upon the history and condition of the Institution during the past year is respectfully submitted.

The year has been one of pleasantness and prosperity. By attention to the natural laws which govern life, by considering them as divine commands, and by obeying them as nearly as possible, the blessing of health (which is in no other way attainable) has been secured. Death has not invaded our borders, and wherever his merciful forerunner, disease, has appeared, to demand account of some sin against the natural law, the forfeit has been light, and life has been spared.

The number of blind persons connected with the Institution in January, 1853, was, —

In the Junior Department,	5	61
In the Work Department,	36
		— 97

During the year 1853, there were admitted, —

To the Junior Department,	19
To the Work Department,	8
		— 27
		<u>124</u>

	124
And there were discharged from the first,	6
And from the second,	7
	— 13
So that the present number is	111

That is, seventy-four in the Junior, and thirty-seven in the Adult Department.

The Institution has been conducted upon the same general principles as in former years. The members thereof have pursued their several occupations with regularity and cheerfulness. Their time is divided between the school-room, the music-room, the workshop, the play-ground, and the bed-room. Two vacations in the year give variety to the pupils, relaxation to the teachers, and the pleasures of home to all.

The general conduct of the pupils has been good. Not only have they shown that eagerness for study and that desire for mental improvement which are characteristic of the blind generally, but they have, moreover, been docile and well-behaved. Though under the instruction, and for the most part under the government, of young women, and without any fear of corporal punishment, they have nevertheless rendered ready obedience to all that was required of them. This speaks well for both parties; and the blind and their friends should feel grateful for the gentle firmness and the constant friendly watchfulness with which the Matron and the teachers have discharged their several duties. The undersigned, while painfully conscious of his inability to do much for the daily and hourly pleasure and profit of the blind, has great comfort in the knowledge that

so much is done by the truly gentle and earnest women who are associated in the work.

The same course of study has been pursued by the pupils as in the preceding years, and generally with great thoroughness. Reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, geography, history, and physiology, are carefully taught and faithfully learned. The study of music continues to be an important branch of instruction, and though not quite so much can be said of the progress of the pupils during the past year as is desirable, still they have made proficiency.

Upon the whole, the record of the year may be filed away among the annals of the past, and inscribed, "Read and approved"; though nothing contained therein should be considered as assuming that all has been done that might have been done, or as lessening the obligation to do more and better in future.

The Work Department for adults has been administered as an independent establishment, according to the policy adopted several years ago. Thirty-seven men and women have been kept supplied with work, by the wages whereof they have been enabled to pay their board at places of their own selection.

The experience of another year shows the superiority of this over any other system that has yet been tried. It gives to the blind certain inestimable advantages in a greater degree than any asylum, any home, or any congregate establishment under whatever name, and however well managed, ever can give them. It lessens their feeling of obligation and increases their feeling of self-respect. It calls into play all the faculties necessary for self-support and self-guidance; but which asylums and homes tend

to paralyze. It gives to every blind man and woman that which we all claim for ourselves, the largest liberty consistent with the rights of others. The best argument in its favor, however, is, that those who have enjoyed it would not willingly give it up for any public asylum that could be provided for them.

The operations of the shop have been more extensive than in any former year. The amount of sales was, in 1852, \$ 19,289.74 ; in 1853, \$ 28,038.58. The amount of wages paid to blind persons was, in 1852, \$ 3,993.33 ; in 1853 it was \$ 4,611.55.

The contract with Mr. Patten, the agent, was renewed, upon more favorable terms to the Institution than before. He was to purchase all the materials, pay the workmen, pay the rent and expenses of the shop in town, keep his own team, in short, assume all the expenses, and make all the sales at his own risk, upon condition that he should have all the profit. The Institution paid the salary of the bookkeeper, and retained general supervision of the establishment. The result shows that the agent has made a loss of \$ 418.67, besides the loss of his own time.

This loss, together with the salary of the bookkeeper, paid by the Institution, makes the net cost of carrying on the workshop fall a little short of eight hundred dollars. This is the worst view of the case. By means of this expenditure nearly forty men and women have been kept employed during the year. They have earned and received over four thousand dollars in wages, and the business has been enlarged so that more persons may be employed and more wages paid in future. Surely twenty-five dollars a year is a small sum to enable a blind man to compete

with seeing workmen, — to put him upon an equality with them, and enable him to earn his own livelihood and to sit at his own hearthstone. There is a more favorable view, however ; for the loss last year is attributable mainly to the failure of two firms with which our shop traded, and by which a loss of \$ 643.77 was sustained. This need not occur again, for although it seems impossible to trade in this community and to keep entirely clear of the crooked, wasteful, and demoralizing course into which abuse of the credit system drives both buyers and sellers, still something may be done by greater firmness than the agent has hitherto shown. Hundreds of wealthy people, and hundreds whose character is more than wealth, present themselves at our counter and buy from one to one hundred dollars' worth of goods, which they expect will be charged to them. And in one sense they have a right to expect it, for in the present universal custom of charging everything, from a skein of thread to a man-of-war's cable, they might well feel aggrieved if credit were refused them. But if they will look at the matter a moment they will not feel aggrieved by being asked to forego, at least when dealing with the blind, a system which is sure in the long run to cause great trouble, loss of time, of money, and of patience.

We are sometimes called upon to make a charge of less than a dollar, — yea, less than a dime, — against very respectable and affluent people. But we will suppose the amount is a dollar. This must first be written down in the "Blotter," then entered upon the "Journal," then posted into the "Leger." Now, to say nothing about "trial balances" and other

botherations of bookkeepers, suppose this bill of one dollar is made out in July or January by the clerk and handed to the boy. He trots up to number seven hundred and forty-eleven Washington Street, rings, and sends in the bill. The lady sends word that "she has not the change in the house, but if the boy will just step down to the counting-room, on Commercial Wharf, her husband will settle it." Away goes the boy to Commercial Wharf, and if he is in luck he catches the gentleman before he has "gone on 'Change." The gentleman says, he dares say it is all right, but then there are so many of those "plaguey little bills" that he had rather speak to his wife about it; and wishes the boy would call up at the house some day after dinner. Accordingly, not to seem too pressing, some day the next week the boy rings at the door, and the servant who hurriedly opens it tells him there is "company to dinner," and she don't like to trouble the gentleman just then, — the boy had better come by and by, — an hour hence. The boy retires meekly, and if he has any other "plaguey little bill" in that neighborhood he goes with it; if not, he considers whether it is best for him to lounge about for the hour, or try to run down to the store and back, when, perhaps, some kindred spirit comes along with a marble or a top and decides the matter for him. At the end of the hour he rings again, and this time it is nearly all right. The lady recollects that she had the article, and that it was a very good one; the gentleman is good-natured, and says he "would be very happy to pay the bill, only he has not change enough about him, but he will try to think to send the amount into the store to-morrow,"

which, perhaps, he does ; but then, again, perhaps he don't. Now suppose he don't, and that the amount is carried to "profit and loss" in despair, who is to pay for the loss ? Why, in the ordinary course of things, the other customers. But suppose he does pay one hundred cents for an article which *cost* net ninety-five, and at least fifty-five for collecting, who is to pay the loss ? Why, the other customers to be sure.

It is true that this habit of doing business has called into existence a class of adroit and "knowing" men called collectors, who have great success in the pursuit of money "under difficulties," and who prevent some demoralization to shop-boys ; but after all, the habit, for it can hardly be called a system, is very bad, at least for our business. It is, however, so common here,—it is considered so much a matter of course, by those who trust everybody, that everybody will trust them,—that many deem it impossible to carry on a retail business without either falling into it, or else giving offence and losing custom. Nevertheless, the habit is so loose and slovenly, so costly, so vexatious to many and unsatisfactory to all, that in the case of our shop a strong effort must be made to break away from it. Our customers are for the most part considerate persons, and will take no offence where none is intended.

It is highly desirable that the business of the Work Department should be increased, in order that its benefits may be extended to a larger number of persons. It ought to have a much larger working capital than it has ever yet had. The scanty funds of the Institution, however, do not suffice to provide for this. Indeed, they do not suffice to carry out other plans of

pressing importance, and which have been so often commended to the attention of the Board, and so often approved by it.

One is the investment of a fund, the interest of which should be devoted to eking out the wages of men and women who can earn nearly, but not quite, enough to support themselves. They can earn enough to pay for three weeks' board in a month, but because they cannot pay for the fourth, and cannot get trusted for it, they must remain idle and be supported by public or private charity somewhere else. They are like people wishing to swim across a river, who have heart and strength for three fourths of the distance, but not for the whole. It is not proposed to provide them a ferry-boat, but to throw them a rope, and to help them to land.

This is a matter which so much commends itself to the hearts of philanthropists that there is strong hope, in a community like ours, of its finding some one who has the will and the means of carrying it into execution.

Another plan is that of providing a fund for printing books for the blind; a plan for the accomplishment of which many who are sitting in darkness are continually hoping.

Greatly as we desire the accomplishment of these purposes and plans, deeply as we may lament that the funds of the Institution do not suffice for all we project and wish for, we must not forget how much there is to be grateful for. The cause of the blind has taken deep hold of the hearts of the people of Massachusetts and of New England, and it will never be neglected. It is as much a matter of certainty that

liberal provision will be made by the public for the instruction of the blind, as that it will be for the instruction of the most favored class. A school or schools for the blind is indeed a necessary part of the system of Common Schools. Nor is this confined to New England. The principal States of the Union have established institutions for the blind within their borders; or have made liberal provision for the instruction of their beneficiaries at other schools. One of the most interesting events of the past year was the Convention of Superintendents and Teachers of the Blind, held in New York in the month of August. There were there present representatives of seventeen schools, and they all gave favorable accounts of the cause of the blind in their various sections of the Union.* When we recall to mind that twenty-eight years ago the good Dr. Fisher and two or three believing friends had obtained an act of incorporation for the first institution for the blind in the United States, but for several years could not obtain means of putting it in operation, and then reflect that they are now springing up all over the country, there is surely reason for gratulation.

These institutions are for the most part established upon a liberal scale, and upon sound principles. They differ from most of the European institutions in two important respects. First, they are not intended as asylums, as places for the maintenance of the blind. They are strictly schools; establishments for the instruction of the blind and their training in some

* The proceedings of this meeting should be put upon more permanent record than the columns of newspapers afford, and they are therefore inserted in this Report as an Appendix.

art or calling by which the inmates can obtain a livelihood.

Second, they are not regarded as charitable or eleemosynary institutions, but as public schools, to the benefits of which the blind have the same right as ordinary children have to Common Schools. They are for the most part administered (as they should always be) upon the principle, that the State is bound to furnish the means of instruction to all children, and since no provision is made for this class in Common Schools, it must be made in special schools or institutions. The adoption of this liberal principle is a great advance upon the system of doling out alms to the blind, or building charity asylums for their support. It takes them out of the category of humble dependents and recipients of charity, and recognizes their social equality.

A still further advance of public opinion will doubtless recognize the claim of the blind upon society for full employment or labor, and sufficient compensation therefor to procure a decent livelihood.

Respectfully submitted by

S. G. HOWE.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX

GENERAL ABSTRACT OF THE

Dr. *Perkins Institution for the Blind in,*

For amount paid on orders of the Auditors of Accounts, for
various disbursements during the year, as per account, \$ 14,327.63
Paid for 5 Shares of new stock, Tremont Bank, . . . 500.00
Balance to new account, 771.08

\$ 15,598.71

Boston, 31st January, 1854.

THE undersigned, a Committee appointed to examine the accounts of the Treasurer of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, for the year 1853, have attended to that duty, and hereby certify that they find the accounts to be correctly cast, and properly vouched, and the balance to be seven hundred and seventy-one dollars $\frac{8}{100}$, say \$ 771.08.

The Treasurer also exhibits to us evidence of the following property belonging to the Institution : —

9	Shares in New England Bank,	. . .	\$ 900.00
83	“ State Bank,	. . .	4,980.00
20	“ Tremont Bank,	. . .	1,975.00
5	“ Tremont Bank (new stock),	. . .	500.00
16	“ Columbian Bank,	. . .	1,600.00
35	“ Atlas Bank,	. . .	3,368.75
25	“ Concord Railroad,	. . .	1,250.00
10	“ Boston and Providence Railroad,	. . .	900.00
2	Certificates City of Boston Water Scrip,	. . .	2,000.00
			<hr/> \$ 17,473.75

A.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 1853.

Account with T. B. WALES, Treasurer. Cr.

By Balance on hand, Jan. 1, 1853,	\$ 1,030.73
“ Annual Appropriation from State of Massachusetts,	9,000.00
“ Amount received from State of Rhode Island,	1,049.00
“ “ “ “ Connecticut,	712.00
“ “ “ “ Vermont,	800.00
Less Collection,	1.00
	<u>799.00</u>
“ “ “ “ State of S. Carolina,	851.46
“ “ “ “ New Hampshire,	450.00
“ Amount received from Private Pupils,	249.50
“ Balance Miss Tufts's Legacy,	100.00
“ Amount received from Visitors,	20.20
“ Dividends on Stocks,	1,190.35
“ By sale of old materials by Steward,	8.25
“ Sale of Books and Apparatus to other Institutions,	130.10
“ Balance of Girls' Fancy-work,	8.12
	<u>\$ 15,598.71</u>

Errors excepted.

(Signed,)

T. B. WALES, *Treasurer.*

Boston, Dec. 31, 1853.

Amount brought up,	\$ 17,473.75
Deed of Land in S. Boston, purchased June, 1844,	\$ 755.68
Deed of Land in S. Boston, purchased March, 1847,	5,000.00
Deed of Land in S. Boston, purchased Sept., 1848,	5,500.00
Deed of Land in S. Boston, purchased Jan., 1850,	1,762.50
Deed of Land in S. Boston, purchased July, 1850,	1,020.25
	<u>14,038.43</u>
	<u>\$ 31,512.18</u>

JOSEPH N. HOWE, } *Committee.*
JAMES LODGE, }

APPENDIX B.

CONVENTION OF SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHERS OF INSTITUTIONS FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND.

THIS Convention was held on the 16th, 17th, and 18th of August, at the New York Institution for the Blind, and was called to order by Wm. Chapin, Esq., of Philadelphia, who nominated T. Colden Cooper, Superintendent of the New York Institution, as Chairman *pro tem.*, and James S. Brown, Esq., of Louisiana, as Secretary.

All Superintendents of Institutions for the Blind, and Teachers of the Blind in such Institutions, were declared entitled to seats in this Convention.

The following gentlemen were then appointed the permanent officers of the Convention : — President, S. G. Howe ; Secretary, T. Colden Cooper.

The delegates present were S. G. Howe, Director Perkins Institution, Mass. ; William Chapin, Principal Pennsylvania Institution ; T. Colden Cooper, Superintendent New York Institution ; R. E. Hart, Superintendent Ohio Institution ; Dr. I. Rhoades, Superintendent Illinois Institution ; Dr. Merillat, Superintendent Virginia Institution ; J. M. Sturtevant, Superintendent Tennessee Institution ; W. H. Churchman, Superintendent Indiana Institution ; C. B. Woodruff, Superintendent Wisconsin Institution ; J. S. Brown, Superintendent Louisiana Institution ; Samuel Bacon, Principal Iowa Asylum ; Henry Dutton, Principal Georgia Institution ; David Loughery, Principal Maryland Institution ; Edward Wheclan, Superintendent Missouri Institution ; B. W. Fay, Teacher Indiana Institution ; A. Reiff, Teacher New York Institution ; J. W. Bligh, Teacher New York Institution.

Invitations were extended to Messrs. Russ, Jones, and Chamberlain, former Superintendents of the New York Institution for the Blind, to attend the meetings of the Convention, and to share its deliberations.

A resolution was also passed inviting the managers of the New York Institution for the Blind, and Mr. E. W. H. Ellis, Trustee of the Indiana Institute, to attend the sittings of this Convention.

On taking the chair, Dr. Howe addressed the Convention as follows : —

“GENTLEMEN : I accept with readiness the place and the duty which your vote assigns to me.

“It is pleasant to meet so many delegates from so many Institutions for the Blind. Here are delegates from Institutions in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Louisiana, beside New York and Massachusetts. But this is not all, for many of the States give generous support to these Institutions, and send to them pupils. When we consider this fact, and look upon this Convention, we have assurance, if indeed any were needed, that the cause of the education of the Blind can never fail in this country for want of public favor or of ardent and able promoters.

“The sight of such a Convention is, moreover, surprising as well as pleasant, for it seems but yesterday (though it is really more than twenty years) that I undertook to organize and put in operation an Institution which had been incorporated four years before in Massachusetts, and I then looked around the country in vain for some one practically acquainted with the subject. There was not then upon this continent a school for the blind, a teacher of the blind, or even a blind person who had been taught by one. I had but an imperfect knowledge of the European schools, and supposed, therefore, that I should gain time, and start with greater chance of success, in what was regarded by many as a visionary enterprise, by going to Europe for teachers and for actual knowledge of all that had been done there.

“I went, therefore, saw what little there was to be seen of schools for the blind, and soon returned, bringing a teacher of the intellectual branches from France, and of the mechanical branches from Scotland. Meantime my old friend and companion, Dr. Russ, had been laying the foundations of the noble Institution in which we are now assembled, and Mr. Friedlander had come from Europe and been urging the inhabitants of Philadelphia to give him an opportunity of showing his skill in the art of teaching the blind, which he had so successfully practised in Germany.

“Dr. Russ has long since turned to another field of philanthropy,

in which he still labors with zeal and ability ; and Friedlander, having successfully finished his work on earth, has gone to receive in heaven the welcome of Well done, good and faithful servant ! All three were thus successful. But, gentlemen, had we all failed in the first attempt, had we all died out of the world, still the work would have gone on, and to-morrow, if not to-day, the many beautiful and flourishing institutions for the blind that now adorn our country would be in existence. God does not leave the fulfilment of his purposes dependent upon such frail contingencies as the life of one man, or of many men. Wherever he suffers an infirmity on an evil to exist, he sows broadcast over the earth in all human hearts the seeds of benevolence, which in due season spring up and bear fruits of beneficence. Hence the simultaneousness of great discoveries, — whether of means for promoting material good or for lessening physical evil ; — the seeds are everywhere, and as soon as the necessary combination of influences arrives, they germinate. In this case they have done so abundantly, perhaps more abundantly here than would have been possible elsewhere. It is nearly fourscore years since the venerable Haüy, amid the prevailing storm of human passions, planted in France the first seed of an institution for the blind ; it is only a score of years since the first seed was planted in this country, yet now we find here about as many institutions as in all Europe.

“ Hence it is that, though in 1830 we might have looked around the country in vain for a single school for the blind, a single teacher for the blind, or a blind person who had been taught in a school, there are now flourishing institutions in most of the great States, from New England to Georgia in the South, and to Wisconsin in the West, — there are ardent and excellent teachers, — there are hundreds of children under instruction, besides those who have graduated from those schools, and who are wiser, better, and happier men and women from having sojourned within them. And let me say, gentlemen, though in no spirit of boasting, that our schools for the blind compare most favorably with those of Europe ; nay, (for why should not the truth be spoken ?) our general system is superior, and some of our schools rank at least equal with the best that can be found abroad. One might say even more, for it is strictly true, that, though this country owes to Europe the first thought of the systematic instruction of the blind, and the first practical effort to demonstrate it, she has already paid the debt with

more than compound interest by great improvement in the general system of instruction, and by valuable improvements in the mode of imparting it. But this is a theme upon which none of us can dwell without danger of encouraging feelings of self-gratulation which had better be suppressed. Let the past be nothing but the lower stepping-stone from which we have attained our present height in our ascent toward the yet unattained height at which we aim.

“We may well congratulate ourselves, gentlemen, upon the present pleasant meeting. It is the first one of the kind ever held, I believe, in any country, but we may be sure it will not be the last. One of the recognized and undoubted advantages of the present over past times is the greater facility for the concentration of the mental power of many persons upon one particular point. This has been heretofore done by free and rapid interchange of thought through the press. But it is not enough that there be impersonal interchange of thought; it is found that every department of knowledge and science may be enlarged and explored with greater advantage when those engaged in it can meet face to face, and ‘magnetize’ and animate each other by personal intercourse.

“We see that doctors, who had pored alone over osteology, or neurology, a score of years, — until they thought they knew the metes and bounds of every foramen, the fibres and fibrillæ of every nerve, as well as they knew the shape of their own fingers, — go home from their annual conventions, and take up the dry bones of their skeletons with a feeling that, after all, they had not learned half of what is to be learned.

“The pursuit of any literary calling in solitude almost surely makes pedants and dullards. The country schoolmaster, doctor, or minister, who mingles not with others of his craft, is very apt to become a conceited pedant, and to consider himself as at the *Ultima Thule* of his profession. The little circle in which he lives looks up to him as a great man; and he looks down upon it as though it were the world. But attendance upon a great convention of members of his profession takes much of this nonsense out of him, if indeed he has not become so fossilized that nothing but nonsense is left within him.

“But if it be useful and necessary for persons of other callings and professions to meet together in order to take out nonsense and put

good sense into each other, it is most particularly so for us. The doctor, lawyer, clergyman, and schoolmaster may readily commune with others of the like calling in the daily walks of life ; but not so with us. We live widely apart, — at the nearest, in contiguous States. It is therefore not only pleasant, but it may be highly profitable to ourselves, and to those for whose good we ought to devote our time and thought, that we meet together. I hail this Convention, therefore, with great pleasure, and regard it with great respect.

“ Among the advantages of a Convention like this will be, apart from the pleasure of personal knowledge and personal intercourse, a careful consideration of what are our duties to the public, whose agents we are, and to the class of persons for whose benefit we hold our offices, and for whose happiness and welfare we are, in a great measure, responsible. Our duties to the public and to the blind are not antagonistic, but on the contrary a wise performance of the one favors the performance of the other.

“ Our duties to the public are manifold. The communities in which we live, recognizing the right of all the young to an education at the hands of the public, and finding that the young blind cannot be taught in common schools, have established institutions for their especial benefit. Over these institutions we preside, and in them we take part. We are to see that these are administered humanely and economically. We are to see that, so far as is possible, the instruction and the training shall be such as will tend to improve and elevate the whole morally and intellectually, — to enable the greatest possible number to support themselves, — to lessen the number of those who must continue for life a charge upon the public, and to diminish the expense of their maintenance by enabling them to do something for themselves. This is especially true of the large proportion of indigent blind. The children of wealthy parents are likely to be provided for by them.

“ But our duty to the public does not end here. We are not only to consider individual blind persons, but the whole subject of blindness, in its phenomenal aspect, as part of the natural history of man. We find in every country, and among every variety of the human race, a certain, though a varying, number of the population who are born blind, or who become blind. Blindness, then, is and has heretofore been one of the phenomena in the natural history of

human development; whether it be an inherent and permanent one is another question.

“Now, it is not only very interesting, but it is very important, to ascertain the phenomenal laws of blindness. Is it from an inherent defect in the organic constitution of the human race that so many of its members in every generation suffer under infirmity? Our faith in the goodness and the omnipotence of the Creator forbids us to believe this. Is it, then, that all races of men have gone out of the way, or have never yet got into the true way of life? Is it in consequence of imperfect civilization, imperfect knowledge of the laws of life, and imperfect obedience even to those that are known, that so many lack an important sense, and thus fall short of the normal standard of health?

“Surely natural reverence for our Creator, and the natural confidence that everything which comes from his hand is either perfect in itself or contains within itself the tendencies and the capacities for attaining perfection, must lead us to this latter conclusion. I believe, moreover, that the limited observations that have been made and recorded go to confirm it. If this be so, then we are to conclude that blindness is not an inherent, but an incidental, defect in the human organization.

“If others of this Convention are of the same mind, then they will agree with me that one important duty which we owe to the public is to institute minute and extensive inquiries into all the phenomena attendant upon blindness, so that by collecting and comparing them we may ascertain the laws that regulate the increase or the decrease of the infirmity, and its greater or less prevalence in the community.

“That such laws exist, I, for my own part, have no manner of doubt. Not only do the numerous analogies in the natural history of domestic animals—the propagation of certain physical peculiarities, the eradication of certain defects, and a hundred similar facts—all lead to this conclusion; but close observation of men and families confirms it.

“There are persons among whose offspring the chance that some will have imperfect sight would seem to be at least as one to a hundred; while there are others, among whose offspring the chance of the occurrence of such infirmity is so small as hardly to be appreciable, certainly not as one to ten thousand.

“Nor is this true alone of the chance of children being *born* blind. There are families in which all the children are born with apparently good sight, but the probability of some of them becoming blind is tenfold greater than is the probability that blindness will occur among the children of another family, who are nevertheless to be exposed to the same accidents. I have known more than one person whose ancestral antecedents were such, that, when I have heard of his becoming blind, I have not wondered so much at the fact, as at the lateness of its occurrence.

“These things being so, they clearly point out a duty we owe to the public, not only so to administer our several institutions as that the pupils shall reverence and obey the natural laws which regulate the increase and decrease of blindness, but also to render these laws widely known in the community ; and I trust that no squeamishness and no morbid sentimentality may restrain us. We are not only to care for such of the blind as be, but we are to see that there be as few of them as possible to be cared for.

“Call me Utopian, or call me what you may, I believe, as I believe in the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator, that a community may so live in obedience to his laws, that, after a few generations, blindness, deafness, insanity, and other infirmities, (save as the result of accidental violence,) would not appear in it. They would be known only as existing among ‘outside barbarians’ who might call themselves civilized, but who would continue to build vast asylums for those unfortunates who ought to be considered as living and suffering proofs of the ignorance or sin of the community which produces them.

“But while believing in the possible physical perfection of a community, and the possible eradication of blindness and other infirmities, one must keep in view the actual imperfection of civilization, and the present and prospective prevalence of blindness. We have our duty to the blind, as well as to the public ; — to the blind as a class, and as individuals. We are to see that, as a class, they understand their rights, and that others know and respect them. It is in no manner their fault that they are blind ; the fault is in the community, — in others ; the misfortune alone, and the consequent sufferings, alas ! are theirs. They are not mere objects of pity, and of cold charity ; they have claims upon the sympathy and upon the justice of the community. We are to demand for them, at the

hands of the public, a full participation in the benefit of education, not as a matter of charity, but as matter of right. In one sense it is the community that makes them blind; let the community redress the wrong as far as it can, by giving them mental light.

“A school for the blind is no more an object of charity than a school for those who see. The state admits the right of every child to instruction at the public charge; and if there be children who cannot be taught in common schools, let the state build an uncommon one for their benefit. Our institutions are only uncommon schools. They ought not to be considered charity schools. The blind ought not to be considered charity scholars more than the others.

“But beside the right of the blind child to instruction, the blind man has a right to the means of labor, and to a living by the results of his labor. If the ordinary labor provided by the community cannot be done by him, let special means of labor be found for him. The blind man has stood hat in hand too long already. He has stood by the way-side, where Bartimæus stood eighteen centuries ago, and probably as many centuries before the day of that worthy and all-believing beggar of Jericho, and has asked alms;—let us teach him that he may put on his hat, and ask justice and work.

“We are to lift up the down-fallen. We are to teach the blind to know and to respect themselves, as the certain way of being respected by others. But while encouraging the blind, and inspiring them with self-respect, we are to avoid running into an extreme, and unduly exciting their self-esteem. In this, as in everything else, we should look to and rely upon the truth, sure that, however disagreeable it may seem at first, it will prove more beautiful in the end than the most agreeable form of untruth. Their outward sight is sealed,—let their inward sight be trained to see and love only the pure light of truth. We should let them understand, that, in spite of all compensations,—in spite of all quickening of other senses,—in spite of all the aids and advantages they may have,—they still suffer under an infirmity so grievous in its nature, so important in its effects, both moral and physical, that they must ever be placed at great disadvantage in the struggle of life.

“It is not only true, that, as a general rule, the lack or the loss of sight is an outward sign of inward bodily weakness or disorder

affecting the whole system, — in a word, of defect or inferiority of physical organization; but it is, moreover, true, that it is, in all cases, an impediment, and a serious one, to the attainment of that degree of bodily and mental vigor that the individual might otherwise reach. There is no study, there is no calling, that a blind man can pursue with the same success that he would do, if, with the same efforts, he had the advantages of sight. It is either a myth, that an old philosopher put out his eyes in order the better to study mathematics and metaphysics, or else the man was no philosopher, but a fool.

“Teach the blind what they lack, and in what they are inferior, and they will be all the more likely to make up by diligence and perseverance for their natural disadvantage. By diligence and perseverance, as is well known to you all, the blind may make rapid progress, and attain eminence in all branches of study, the illustrations of which do not require the aid of light and shade. Most of the pupils of the institutions for the blind in this country actually receive a better intellectual education than ordinary children in the same walk of life obtain in the common schools. This arises in part from what is in other respects a great disadvantage, — to wit, the lack of printed text-books, which obliges the teachers to depend upon oral instruction.

“But, happily, in one respect, and that one of the greatest importance, the blind are at no disadvantage. I mean the capacity for development and cultivation of the moral and affectional nature. It needs no outward vision to see the excellence of knowledge, the beauty of truth, the holiness of virtue. It needs no eye to guide the affections to the legitimate objects of love. Ajax prayed for light to see and smite his foes; he would have needed none to know and love his friends.

“But, gentlemen, this subject is too important for me to enter upon in a cursory and informal discourse. I commend it to your serious attention as one of vital importance. You know as well as I do how often the blind manifest moral capacities, spiritual excellences, and affectional emotions of the highest order. You, as well as myself, must have felt that they have sometimes exchanged positions and offices with us, and become our exemplars and teachers of virtues and affections.

“For my own part, when I recall to memory some blind persons

whom I have known, and think of their cheerful resignation to their heavy calamity, — their forgetfulness of their own misfortune in their eagerness to lighten the misfortunes of others, — their abiding faith, their enduring hope, their abundant charity, — I feel that it is I who have been the gainer from the intercourse between us. I prize humanity more highly, I reverence its Author more devoutly, when I see that, crushed and broken by calamity, it still exhales the odor of virtue.

“But, gentlemen, I will no longer trespass upon your attention, or detain you from the commencement of your labors.”

The Convention then proceeded to business, and discussed the several resolutions and propositions submitted by the committee or by individuals. An animated debate ensued, in which several blind persons, educated in the various institutions, took prominent parts, and gave proof of their talents and acquirements.

The following resolutions were finally adopted, as expressing the views of the Convention.

“*Resolved*, That, whereas most of the States of the Union are provided with institutions for the education of the blind, this Convention representing such institutions recommend the following resolutions : —

“*Resolved*, That a permanent provision in aid of the education of the blind, and for a suitable library in the raised letters, should be regarded as a subject of national concern.

“*Resolved*, That, as Congress has appropriated large portions of the public lands for general education, from the benefits of which the blind have been and necessarily are excluded, their claim for a portion of the proceeds of these lands to aid in their education is both just and reasonable.

“*Resolved*, That a memorial in behalf of the Institutions for the Blind in the United States be presented to the next session of Congress, asking for national aid by an appropriation of public land, — a portion to be equitably applied to all the States for the education of their blind, and a portion for a specific fund for printing books in raised letters.

“*Resolved*, That Messrs. Howe, Chapin, Cooper, Brown, and Churchman be a committee to prepare such memorial, previous to the first day of January next.

“ *Resolved*, That it will be expedient for a delegation of pupils from several institutions to visit Washington on the presentation of the memorial, to give public illustration of the success of the system of instructing the Blind.

“ *Resolved*, While this Convention would not discourage the use of any type or character now in existence, they decidedly recommend a uniform type or letter for all future publications for the blind.

“ *Resolved*, That the ‘Boston letter,’ so called, in which the great bulk of books for the blind have been printed, be preferred as the standard type for all future books printed for the blind, subject to the amendments proposed in the following resolution.

“ *Resolved*, That a committee of three, including the President of this Convention, be appointed at this meeting to examine the ‘Boston letter,’ to ascertain whether any alteration in any of said letters be expedient, and if so, to recommend its general adoption.

“ *Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed by the chair, to consider upon and report to the next Convention a plan for the publication of a periodical expressly devoted to the advancement of education among the blind.

“ *Resolved*, That such committee, if they find it practicable to procure the publication of such periodical as a private enterprise, be authorized, in behalf of this Convention, to secure the commencement of the same under their own general supervision.

“ *Resolved*, That in the event of the commencement of such a publication, the instructors and pupils in all existing institutions for the blind be invited to contribute to its columns.

“ *Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to correspond with the ‘American Bible Society,’ with a view of obtaining from said Society a copy of the New Testament and of the Psalms for every blind person who shall present to them a certificate of the principal of the institution where he or she was educated, that he or she can read, and is unable to pay for such book.

“ *Resolved*, That this Convention do not approve of the recent method of binding the Bible for the blind, by the ‘Bible Society,’ which unites the leaves so as to present the printing on both sides of the leaf, and accordingly suggest the expediency of the Bible being bound as formerly ; and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the officers of the Bible Society.”

Messrs. Wheelan, Churchman, and Sturtevant presented a report upon Mr. Mahony's system of musical notation, which, after some debate, was adopted by the Convention.

“Resolved, That this Convention recommend to the various Institutions for the Blind, and to all blind persons interested in the subject of music, the new system of notation devised by Mr. Mahony, as possessing many advantages.

“Resolved, That Mr. Mahony merits the encouragement of this Convention in his laudable efforts to supply this desideratum in the education of the blind.”

The question of discipline in schools for the blind was discussed at some length, and it was remarkable that all the speakers who were blind insisted that blind children should be subjected to an equally strict discipline with seeing children. It was finally

“Resolved, That the fact of blindness should make no difference in the discipline of children.”

A highly interesting debate followed on the necessity of connecting manufacturing departments with all institutions for the blind, and it was

“Resolved, That, in the opinion of this Convention, every institution should offer employment to all its graduates of good moral character.”

It was then resolved, that a committee be appointed to call another Convention of Superintendents and Teachers of the Blind, and that in such Convention each institution shall be entitled to but one vote.

Mr. Churchman was invited to furnish to the next Convention an essay upon the best plan of public buildings for the Blind.

The thanks of the Convention were then offered to the Directors, Superintendents, and other officers of the New York Institution for the Blind, for the hospitalities tendered and courtesies shown the members of this Convention during its session.

TERMS OF ADMISSION.

YOUNG blind persons, of good moral character, can be admitted to the School by paying \$160 *per annum*. This sum covers all expenses, except for clothing; namely, board, washing, medicines, the use of books, musical instruments, &c. The pupils must furnish their own clothing, and pay their own fares to and from the Institution.

There is a vacation in the Spring, and another in the Autumn. The friends of the pupils can visit them whenever they choose.

Indigent blind persons, of suitable age and character, belonging to Massachusetts, can be admitted gratuitously, by application to the Governor for a warrant.

The following is a good form, though any other will do: —

“TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR: —

“SIR, — My son, (or daughter, or nephew, or niece, as the case may be,) named A. B., and aged , cannot be instructed in the common schools for want of sight. I am unable to pay for the tuition at the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, and I request that your Excellency will grant a warrant for free admission.

“Very respectfully, ——— ———.”

The application may be made by any relation or friend, if the parents are dead or absent.

It should be accompanied by a certificate from one or more of the Selectmen of the town, or Aldermen of the city, in this form: —

“I hereby certify, that, in my opinion, Mr. ——— is not a wealthy person, and that he cannot afford to pay \$160 *per annum* for his child's instruction.

(Signed,) “——— ———.”

There should also be a certificate, signed by some regular physician, in this form: —

"I certify, that, in my opinion, — — — has not sufficient vision to be taught in common schools; and that he is free from epilepsy, and from any contagious disease.

(Signed,) " — — — — —."

These papers should be done up together, and directed to "The Secretary of State, State-House, Boston, Mass."

An obligation will be required from some responsible person, that the pupil shall be removed without expense to the Institution, whenever it may be desirable to discharge him.

The usual period of tuition is from five to seven years.

Indigent blind persons residing in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and South Carolina, by applying as above to the "Commissioners for the Blind," care of the Secretary of State in the respective States, can obtain warrants of free admission.

For further particulars, address Dr. S. G. Howe, Director of the Institution for the Blind, Boston, Mass.

The relations or friends of the blind who may be sent to the Institution are requested to furnish information in answer to the following questions: —

1. What is the age of the applicant?
2. Where was he born?
3. Was he born blind?
4. If not born blind, at what age did he become so?
5. What is the supposed cause of the blindness?
6. Have there been any cases of blindness, or deafness, or insanity, in the family of the applicant, among his brothers and sisters, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, or cousins?
7. Were his parents or grandparents affected with scrofula, in any form; with consumption; humors, such as salt-rheum; eruptions of any kind; or had they any peculiarity of bodily constitution whatever?
8. Were the parents or the grandparents of the applicant related to each other by blood? If so, in what degree?

OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION,

FOR 1854.

PRESIDENT.

RICHARD FLETCHER.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

STEPHEN FAIRBANKS.

TREASURER.

T. B. WALES, JR.

SECRETARY.

SAMUEL G. HOWE.

TRUSTEES.

THOMAS G. CARY,	} <i>In behalf of the Corporation.</i>
THEOPHILUS P. CHANDLER,	
GEORGE B. EMERSON,	
JOSEPH LYMAN,	
SAMUEL MAY,	
GEORGE R. RUSSELL,	
G. HOWLAND SHAW,	

The Board of Visitors, consisting of the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, &c., have appointed

THOMAS T. BOUVÉ,	} <i>Trustees in behalf of the State.</i>
STEPHEN FAIRBANKS,	
EDWARD JARVIS,	
W. D. TICKNOR,	



